



BRIEFING STATEMENT

BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS

MONTANA STATE OFFICE • 5001 SOUTHGATE DRIVE • BILLINGS, MONTANA 59101 • WWW.BLM.GOV/MT

March 19, 2012

SUBJECT: NOXIOUS WEEDS

I. SUMMARY:

Noxious weeds are still the single largest biological threat to the nation's natural resources. They continue to spread on all lands, reducing natural biodiversity and vegetation production and leading to soil erosion. Noxious weeds infest approximately six percent of BLM lands in Montana.

II. BACKGROUND:

In 2011, the Montana/Dakotas BLM treated 82,573 acres using integrated weed management (IWM) methods in cooperation with other landowners and managers. We monitored an additional 256,514 acres for weed infestations, and 95,022 acres for the effectiveness of weed management efforts. Due to the long wet spring and exceptionally high river flows, our accomplishments for 2011 were somewhat lower than we had planned.

The BLM's weed management program involves cooperative efforts with other federal and state agencies, universities, counties, high school agriculture science classes, and private landowners. There is heavy emphasis on prevention techniques to protect non-infested lands. The BLM-Montana/Dakotas also uses early detection and rapid response to reduce new infestations and to use existing funds in the most cost-efficient manner. The magnitude of our weed program, particularly our cooperative agreements with counties and private cooperators, exceeds specifically earmarked weed funding in our annual budget. Discretionary funding from other programs that benefit from weed management has been used to augment the program, but total funding is still short of what is needed to meet the program needs. The Montana/Dakotas staff have been very active in leveraging funds through Challenge Cost Share and seeking grants such as Pulling Together and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for additional funding.

The BLM cooperates in prevention and education programs, including producing noxious weed videos, brochures, posters and other materials; certified weed seed free forage programs; biological weed control demonstration sites; IWM tours; and weed workshops. The BLM-Montana/Dakotas staff will continue to provide training and technical assistance to various resource and weed management staffs. The BLM supports and incorporates the guidelines in the May 2008 Montana Weed Management Plan in conjunction with other county, state, and federal agencies. The Montana/Dakotas staff also incorporates management direction from national "Partners Against Weeds" strategy, the management plan from the National Invasive Species Council, and the Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic EIS, September 2007.

We are committed to doing the best job possible with available funding and will work cooperatively with our partners to set priorities. Montana/Dakotas BLM is also committed to IWM, which includes prevention, education, awareness, biological agents (insects and plant diseases), cultural practices, chemicals, physical, mechanical, re-vegetation, and the use of domestic animals. To comply with both federal and state law, the BLM will continue to use an IWM approach and encourage all resource management disciplines to participate in active IWM. It is imperative that the BLM and other cooperators continue their efforts or the weed battle will be lost.

Weed management will continue to be a high priority. Our staff has expended considerable effort to apply for, or assist cooperators in applying for, outside source funding. Often these funds have stipulations preventing their use on public lands, which again limits our ability to meet the weed challenge.

The Montana/Dakota staff is working in cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to increase staff and public awareness of aquatic invasive species. This will move the BLM in the direction of management of all types of invasives on public lands and waters.

PUBLIC INTEREST:

Because BLM's weed program is a cooperative effort involving many counties as well as other state and federal agencies, high schools and universities, and private landowners, any reduced capability by one partner adds to the funding or treatment burden on the others. There is a universal concern about the spread of noxious weeds and efforts to control them. Weed management cooperative groups and individuals will continue to petition congressional representatives for assistance with this problem.

CONTACT:

John Simons, Vegetation and Restoration Specialist, (406) 896-5043.